DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 474 CG 028 411

AUTHOR Schaffer, Eugene C.; And Others
TITLE Impediments to Reform: An Analysis of Destabilizing Issues in Ten Promising Programs.
INSTITUTION Educational Research Service, Arlington, VA.; Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, Baltimore, MD.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 97
NOTE 27p.
CONTRACT R206R50001; R117D40005
AVAILABLE FROM Educational Research Service, 2000 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201 (Stock No. 0147, $8, subscriber; $12, nonsubscriber; add the larger of $3.50 or 10% of purchase price for postage and handling; prepaid).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; *High Risk Students; Leadership; Longitudinal Studies; *Organizational Development; Politics of Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Public Opinion; Racial Relations; School Community Relationship

ABSTRACT

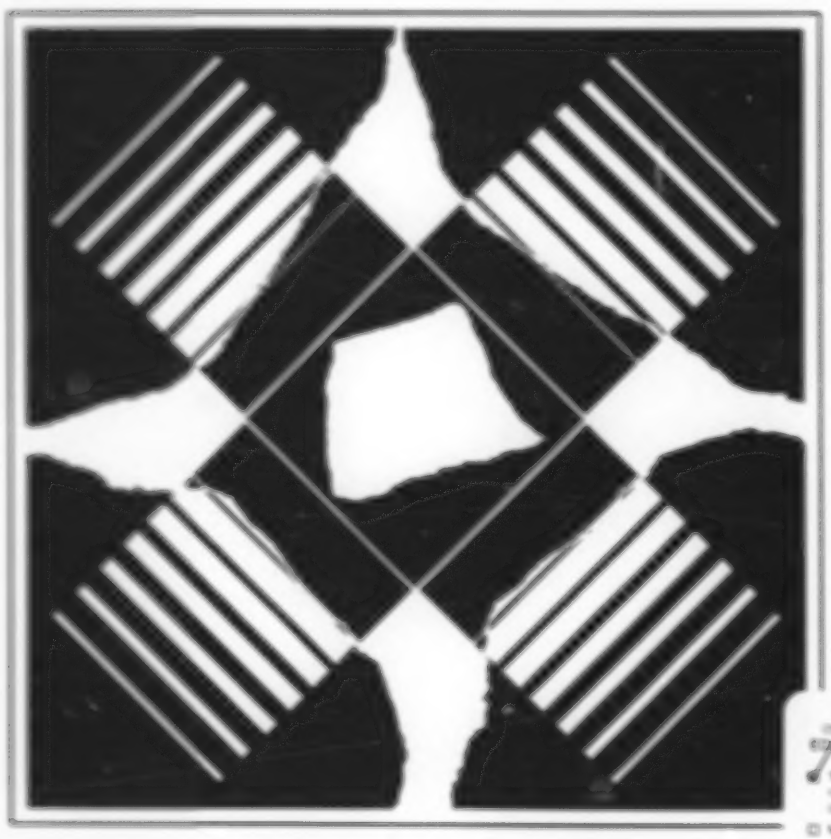
Major school-improvement efforts, despite planning, will constantly encounter a variety of problems (Louis and Miles, 1990). This paper identifies impediments to school reform that were widespread within both elementary and secondary schools with large populations of socioeconomically disadvantaged children. The paper identifies broad, overarching conditions that must be met to replicate successful programs for at-risk students. Data were gathered during the study of "Urban and Suburban/Rural Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children," a Congressionally mandated and funded study of promising school-reform efforts implemented prior to 1990 in schools with a majority population of economically disadvantaged children. The 3-year study evaluated and compared the success of 10 different programs: (1) Comer Model (School Development Program); (2) Success for All; (3) Paideia Program; (4) Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer); (5) Schoolwide Projects; (6) Extended Year Schoolwide Projects; (7) Reading Recovery; (8) Computer Assisted Instruction; (9) Extended Time Projects; and (10) Tutoring Programs ("locally adapted"). Methods included visits to 25 program sites (2 visits per year at each school), document analysis, observation, and interviews. Ten issues appeared to hinder the successful, full implementation of each reform effort: financing; leadership; commitment; perceptions of the general public, of parents, and of students; program staffing; curriculum; political pressures; racial problems; insufficient facilities; and problems of management and scheduling. One figure is included. The appendix contains program descriptions. (Contains five references.) (LMI)

ED 408 676

Relevant Research for School Decisions

Impediments to Reform:
An Analysis of Destabilizing Issues in Ten Promising Programs

Eugene C. Schaffer,
Pamela S. Nesselrodt,
and Samuel C. Stringfield



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Educational Research Service

EA 028 402

Relevant Research for School Decisions

Impediments to Reform:

An Analysis of Destabilizing Issues in Ten Promising Programs

Eugene C. Schaffer,
Pamela S. Nesselrodt,
and Samuel C. Stringfield

Copyright © 1997 Educational Research Service

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE
The Information Source for School Decisions
2000 Clarendon Boulevard • Arlington, Virginia 22201
General Phone: (703) 243-2100 • Fax: (703) 243-1871
Publication Orders Phone: (800) 791-8308 • Fax: (800) 791-8309

Sponsored by:
American Association of School Administrators
American Association of School Personnel Administrators
Association of School Business Officials
Council of Chief State School Officers
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National School Public Relations Association

Educational Research Service is an independent, nonprofit research foundation serving the research and information needs of the nation's schools. ERS Comprehensive Subscriptions are available to local school districts, state and local associations of school administrators and school boards, state departments of education, and other related organizations.

Comprehensive Subscription rates are graduated according to school district size or type of agency, and are available on request. For one annual fee, Comprehensive subscribers receive a broad range of resources, including:

- access for district administrators to the ERS On-Call Information Service, which provides customized packets of information;
- a copy of each new ERS report on priority concerns in education (12 to 15 per year);
- the monthly *ERS Bulletin*, summarizing educational research produced by other agencies;
- the quarterly *ERS Spectrum*, the journal of school research and information;
- the thrice-yearly *Successful School Practices*, summarizing a sampling of successful programs and practices from districts of all sizes across the country;
- ERS School District Comparative Profiles, individually prepared reports on district revenues and expenditures, salaries and wages, and staffing ratios.

In addition to the ERS Comprehensive Subscription, ERS reports are available for purchase separately. Educators can also obtain ERS Individualized Subscriptions bringing them the ERS resources of greatest interest to them. Call ERS Member Services for more information about ERS subscriptions and resources.

Senior Staff:

John M. Forsyth
President

E. Jean Weber
Director of Administration

Josephine L. Franklin
Director of Information Services

Katherine A. Behrens
Director of Membership

Deborah Perkins-Gough
Director of Publications

Nancy J. Protheroe
Director of Research

Melinda H. Brown
Director of Salary and Compensation Studies

Impediments to Reform: An Analysis of Destabilizing Issues in Ten Promising Programs was written by Eugene C. Schaffer of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Pamela S. Nesselrodt of Loyola University of Chicago, and Samuel C. Stringfield of The Johns Hopkins University.
ERS wishes to express appreciation to the authors for sharing this report with others.

The *ERS Relevant Research for School Decisions* series presents significant and timely research of special importance for school decisions from the following sources: 1) original study reports and research papers; 2) condensations and reproductions of published research reports and articles; and 3) syntheses of research studies on specific problems or issues.

The data, information, and analyses presented in this series are those of the authors. Publication of this research does not imply endorsement or recommendation of its specific contents or findings by ERS or any of its sponsoring organizations.

ORDERING INFORMATION: ERS Comprehensive Subscriber price: $6.00. (Single copy routinely mailed as part of ERS Comprehensive Subscription.) Nonsubscriber price: $12.00. Quantity discounts are available. All mail orders must be accompanied by check or purchase order. Phone orders accepted with Visa or MasterCard. Please add the larger of $3.50 or 10% of purchase price for postage and handling. Stock #0245.

Table of Contents

Foreword v

About the Authors vi

Two Narratives Based on Research Findings 1

Purpose and Setting 4

Methodology 5

Research Findings 6

Conclusions and Recommendations 15

References 17

Figure 1.–Destabilizing Issues in School Reform Programs, as Identified by Special Strategies Staff and Field Researchers 10

Appendix A.–Special Strategies Studies: Descriptions of Ten Promising Programs

Foreword

This publication, *Impediments to Reform: An Analysis of Destabilizing Issues in Ten Promising Programs,* provides important research findings and analyses that deserve the attention of teachers, educational leaders, school board members, legislators, and others who are concerned with bringing about meaningful and lasting reform in America's public schools.

By focusing on specific factors that can impede school reform, this *ERS Relevant Research for School Decisions* publication provides insight about implementing, sustaining, and replicating promising programs for educating all students. It is the work of three of the nation's prominent research analysts: Eugene C. Schaffer of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Pamela S. Nesselrodt of Loyola University of Chicago, and Samuel C. Stringfield of The Johns Hopkins University.

The research findings reported here were originally presented in a research paper by the three authors at the Tenth International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement in Memphis, Tennessee, January 7, 1997. The data analyzed were gathered as part of the studies of Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by the research staffs of The Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools and Abt Associates, Inc. These studies were longitudinal, with data collected and observations made at exemplary school sites over a three-year period.

The authors' findings were drawn from the same comprehensive data base as the recently published ERS monograph, *Ten Promising Programs for Educating ALL Students: Evidence of Impact,* authored by Rebecca Herman and Sam Stringfield. Hence, this ERS *Relevant Research* publication is a companion publication, which should be viewed as further analysis of the research base described in the ERS monograph.

John M. Forsyth, President
Educational Research Service

About the Authors

Eugene C. Schaffer is Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research interests include school reform, teacher effectiveness, and program development and evaluation. Dr. Schaffer currently serves as Chair of the Department of Middle, Secondary and K-12 Education.

Pamela S. Nesselrodt is Director of the Secondary Education Program at Loyola University, Chicago. Her primary research interests are school reform, program development and evaluation, teacher effectiveness, and improving the educational opportunities of children placed at risk. Dr. Nesselrodt is currently the principal investigator for a grant funded through the Chicago Public Schools' 10,000 Tutors Initiative.

Samuel C. Stringfield is a principal research scientist at The Johns Hopkins University Center for the Social Organization of Schools (CSOS). He serves as co-director of the Systemic and Policy Studies section of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR). Dr. Stringfield is also co-director of the Program on Integrated Reform at the University of California at Santa Cruz Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE). He is a founding co-editor of the *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk (JESPAR).*

The research on which this paper is based was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Contract #LC 90010001 and Contract #90010002. Preparation of this paper was supported by a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, to the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk at Johns Hopkins and Howard Universities (Grant No. R117D-40005). However, any opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the funders, nor those of the Educational Research Service or any of its sponsoring organizations.

Two Narratives Based on Research Findings

This research paper begins with two brief narratives, which provide a realistic perspective for an examination of the research findings. The reader will find it both interesting and helpful to read the narratives before examining the data and conclusions presented by the authors.

A Tale of Impending Doom

When Pineybark Elementary School opened its doors in fall 1994 to begin its fifth year as a Paideia school, Joan Autry wasn't there. Mrs. Autry had been the program coordinator and one of the originators of the program at Pineybark. But in the spring of 1993, Mrs. Autry requested a transfer to another school in the district. She was suffering from battle fatigue caused by waging an annual war against threats to the school's Paideia program.*

Each spring since they began implementing the program, Mrs. Autry and her principal had submitted a budget for the next school year that included materials they felt necessary for the continued development of the Paideia program at Pineybark. Then, the worry began. Conversations with people in the school district's central office hinted at the probability of budgetary shortfalls and the cutting of Mrs. Autry's position. The Paideia program had been started with seed money from a local grants program that encouraged innovations within the district. But that grant ran out after the first year of the program. Unfortunately, four years later, the program still hadn't gained a stable funding base.

Every spring, the program had been saved at the eleventh hour by a single advocate. For the first three years, the area superintendent for the school came to the defense of Pineybark's Paideia program. When his position was cut as part of sweeping changes brought to the school district by a new superintendent, Mrs. Autry wasn't sure who would rescue the program. In fact, she hoped the school wouldn't need to be rescued. When the new district superintendent unveiled a plan for magnet schools in the district to meet court-mandated desegregation orders, Mrs. Autry and others at Pineybark

* *Note:* All schools and individuals named have been given pseudonyms.

thought that the Paideia school, which was already up and running, would be named as one of the magnets. But it wasn't.

For the first time, Pineybark faced a spring without a district advocate for the program. Mrs. Autry and her principal once again submitted a budget that included funding for both the coordinator's position and further development of the Paideia program, hoping that somehow the funding would come through. And a new advocate did appear—this time in the form of a school board member with whom Mrs. Autry had a chance meeting at a civic function. Once again, at the eleventh hour, Mrs. Autry's position was saved. The Paideia program continued for another year.

It appeared that nothing happened. No jobs were lost; the program continued for the next year. Mrs. Autry had once again fought a "ghost war." She had battled threats to her program and her position and won. To a casual observer, things at her school remained the same.

But Mrs. Autry knew that she painfully grappled every year with the decision about leaving the position and taking a more secure one if an offer appeared. She knew that this grappling and battling each year took time and energy—time and energy that could have been better spent in strengthening the program for the students at her school. She knew that her own level of commitment to the program waned each time she was forced to go to battle. She knew that neither the teachers nor the administration at her school had the same fervor about the program that they had at the outset of its implementation—because they knew that, at any time, it could be lost. So, something did happen. The constant fighting of this "ghost war" had taken a toll.

And this time, the save had come too late. By the time the funding came through, Mrs. Autry had already decided that she could no longer face the uncertainty, and had requested a transfer to one of the magnet schools in her district. She knew that this magnet school for academically gifted youngsters would not face the same financial threat, and that she would not have to face this destabilizing force year after year.

The Story of a Collapse

When Cardinal Elementary School began the 1992-93 school year, there was a marked difference from the year before. The school showed the scars of a battle lost. It had suffered the losses of the assistant principal, the school nurse, the Schoolwide Program facilitator, the library assistant, and two teachers. In addition, the student-teacher ratio in grades 4 and 5 had soared from 20-1 to 30-1. What had caused this kind of dramatic change? What kind of battle would render this much devastation?

The school, along with others in the district, had lost funding for its Chapter I Schoolwide Program.

Neither the principal, Mrs. Weaver–described by various members of her faculty, as the "white tornado," "our defense," and "a bulwark"–nor the district's Chapter I coordinator, Mr. Green–known for his dedication to meeting the needs of disadvantaged children–could save the program. The previous spring, the district's superintendent had announced that all schoolwide projects in the district would be canceled for the 1992-93 school year. The cancellation was the result of a necessary downward adjustment in the school district's budget and the subsequent failure of a year-long effort by the superintendent to enlist financial support from the state legislature, local government, and local businesses.

To Cardinal, a school that the year before had lost 40 of its top students to a magnet school that had opened less than two miles away, this loss added injury to insult. Sure, the magnet school–one of the results of an on-going local desegregation case–had a more racially balanced student body (50 percent white and 50 percent African-American) than Cardinal (100 percent African-American). It also received more money than Cardinal, had a more select group of teachers, a newly renovated building, a beautiful computer laboratory, and finally, the support of the people who had once been the leadership of Cardinal's PTA–all of whom had enrolled their children in the magnet. But Cardinal had been on the upswing with its Schoolwide Program.

On the upswing, that is, until the program had been wiped out. The superiority of their schoolwide project over prior pullout programs had been one of the few things on which Mrs. Weaver's polarized faculty could agree. And then the program was gone. The new school year, without the previous funding, brought with it less time for Mrs. Weaver and her faculty to develop the curriculum for the children and to deal with discipline. It meant that secretaries had to administer prescriptions to the more than 50 children who needed them on a daily basis. And when Mrs. Weaver was called to the central office for meetings, a teacher had to cancel her academic or clinical tasks to "cover" the office. It meant that resources were spread very thin–the computer lab had received less than half the requested funding, so it had to be used on a pullout basis for 12 children at a time rather than for an entire class.

Mrs. Weaver and her faculty, who described teaching the students at Cardinal as draining, were not strangers to adversity. They lived and worked in one of the nation's poorest states–a state in which battles against poverty and bigotry often have been lost and where, it appears, people have learned to live with their losses and the destabilization that they bring. But each lost battle rendered the school weaker and weaker. Each lost battle put the implementation of programs that appeared to have a positive effect on both students and faculty into limbo or perhaps into an abyss.

Purpose and Setting

Our purpose here is to identify and describe specific impediments to school reform that emerged from data gathered during the longitudinal study of *Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children* (Stringfield et al. in press). These ten special strategies are described in detail and the related research is reported in the recently published ERS monograph by Herman and Stringfield (1997).

The impediments to school reform reported here were found to be widespread within both elementary and secondary schools with large populations of socioeconomically disadvantaged children. These forces, either actual or threatening, can impede and potentially destroy school reform efforts. By understanding these threats prior to choosing or designing new programs for school improvement, "effective change managers" (Louis and Miles 1990) can offset them–either by implementing programs that are congruent with the school's environment and resources or by making plans to cope with the threats.

For example, in the beginning narratives, what did Mrs. Autry and Mrs. Weaver have in common? Each had been forced, in a different way, to face the destabilization of a reform effort at her school. Mrs. Weaver's program completely lost special schoolwide project funding and many of its best and brightest students. Mrs. Autry's program faced the much less tangible problem of being repeatedly tipped off-balance for several months each year, unsure of its future. Mrs. Weaver's superintendent had fought a real war against a lack of funding for his schools' programs. Mrs. Autry had fought a "ghost" war with an enemy that never materialized but haunted her year after year until she was finally defeated.

In *Improving the Urban High School,* Louis and Miles argue that "major school improvement efforts, no matter how well planned, will constantly encounter a wide range of problems at all stages." They maintain that effective change managers are those who, with *"persistence and tenacity,"* develop long-term goals and stick to them. They further describe effective change managers as those with "high tolerance for complexity and ambiguity...[who] exhibit a willingness to live with risks, as they try various ways to solve persistent issues." They note that schools successfully dealing with stress take a "problems are our friends" attitude and move in a concerted way to address the issues (1990, pp. 34-35).

Rossi and Stringfield (1996) identify broad, overarching conditions that must be met in replicating successful programs for at-risk students. These conditions are "community in schools and schools as high-reliability organizations" (p. 14). They also cite elements needed for the successful implementation of reforms, which include

monetary, personnel, material, and political resources. While these conditions and resources do not negate the need for the kind of flexible leadership described by Louis and Miles, they do expand the focus of what is necessary for successful school reform. Such reform requires not only effective leadership and management, but also productive relationships among the people involved and supportive structures to provide stability based on knowledge of proven best practice. This stability frees stakeholders in the reform process to take appropriate risks and helps to institutionalize the reform effort.

Citing research that has shown the possibility of providing educational experiences that raise the achievement levels of at-risk children, Rossi and Stringfield call for "a coherent and sustained program of applied research and evaluation studies of the conditions that foster or cripple valuable school-based reforms for students placed at risk" (1996, p. 22).

Methodology

Data for this paper were gathered during the study of *Urban and Suburban/Rural Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children,* a Congressionally mandated and funded study of promising school reform efforts that had been implemented prior to 1990 in schools with a majority population of economically disadvantaged children (Stringfield et al. 1994; Stringfield et al. in press). The three-year study, which included both qualitative and quantitative data, was designed to evaluate and compare the success of ten different programs:

1. Comer Model (School Development Program)
2. Success for All
3. Paideia Program
4. Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer)
5. Schoolwide Projects
6. Extended Year Schoolwide Projects
7. Reading Recovery
8. Computer Assisted Instruction
9. Extended Time Projects
10. Tutoring Programs *(Locally Adapted)*

Appendix A at the end of this paper presents a brief description of each of the ten programs.

Sites were selected from lists of schools nominated by experts as being exemplars of each of the ten Special Strategies to be studied. Two primary sites were selected per program for intensive longitudinal study, with two exceptions: 1) four locally developed Schoolwide Project sites were selected, and 2) five Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) sites were selected. CES was the only program in the study implemented at the secondary school level. A total of 25 primary longitudinal sites were involved in the study.

In addition to the longitudinal sample, the design called for visiting multiple replication sites for each of the programs, except for the four Schoolwide Project sites and the five CES sites. The replicates provided valuable data on diverse variables that may facilitate or impede implementation of specific strategies. It should be noted that in this paper the terms *strategies* and *programs* may be used interchangeably.

Data were gathered during a three-year period. Two-member field research teams conducted two site visits per year at each school, one during the fall semester and one during the spring semester. Each site visit lasted from three to five days. Data were gathered from multiple sources: selected school records, standardized tests, writing samples from the children, observations of selected students' whole school days, and structured interviews with school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members. Case reports were developed that included first- and second-level analyses of all data collected.

To determine whether reform efforts were being stabilized or destabilized, the case report for each site was reviewed for elements that might indicate the conditions of success, improvement, maintenance, ineffectiveness, or disaster. Particular emphasis was placed on interviewees' responses to questions related to the continuation of the program or threats to the continuation of the program. In addition, the analyses of sites by the field research teams were examined for their assessment of the performance of the strategy, its potential for success, and threats to its continuation.

Research Findings

The close examination of the case reports yielded ten issues that appeared to be hindering the successful, full implementation of each reform effort as described by the original program developers. As can be seen in Figure 1 on pages 10-11, these

issues involved: 1) financing of the programs; 2) leadership of the programs; 3) commitment to the program; 4) perceptions of the general public, of parents, and of students; 5) staffing of the program; 6) the curriculum; 7) political pressures; 8) racial problems; 9) insufficient facilities; and 10) problems of management and scheduling of students and the necessary communication among staff. These categories of destabilizing issues, then, emerged across programs and across sites.

While this analysis of the data documented several stable and successful implementations of school reform efforts, it also documented ten separate issues or conditions, present at two or more sites each, that served to hinder implementation of potentially useful programs. Most sites involved in the study reflected some conflicts and struggles that were working to destabilize the program. On the other hand, few sites reflected all of the major categories, and few succumbed completely to the problems they faced. All, save one, remained at least partially viable throughout the study.

The following discussion gives more detail about the ways in which each of these issues manifested itself at the various sites. Figure 1 summarizes this information.

Financial issues–

Financial problems that destabilized programs appeared to be many and varied in their impact on the schools. One essential problem was that overall limited funding caused schools to take on one new program after another. Each new program came with available funding for initial implementation as well as the additional incentives of materials and staffing–both in short supply at these schools. Many schools took the money at any cost, often without considering their capacity to complete the implementation, let alone institutionalize the changes. For example:

> *When asked about the future of the Comer School Development program at his school, an assistant principal saw the problem of continuation as follows: "We'll cut it out. Short-term funding is what kills programs." He felt that a quick turnover of funds at the district level creates temporary programs, not allowing a program to take its course, to grow and change over longer periods of time.*
>
> *"This school district does not have a strong tax base. The grants and funds from the Federal government are all short-term and usually have their own agendas and goals. Actually, the Comer program has been one of the programs that has lasted the longest, and has validity in terms of impact in the long run."*

Finances sometimes forced decisions that were clearly counter-productive to the goals of a program. In one case, a site that was a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools was unable to meet recommendations of the Coalition to reduce the number of students seen by the teachers to 80 per teacher. They were never able to

meet this essential part of the program because of the financial limitations of the district. At other school reform sites, planning time was foregone, books were not available, computers began to have more down time, and the curriculum was influenced by the lack of resources.

Leadership issues–

Leadership issues beset many of the schools. In some cases, principals did not commit to, or even understand, the program for which they were providing leadership. For example, one Coalition of Essential Schools principal could not name more than two of the nine principles that guide CES schools. Given the critical place the principal holds in guiding and supporting this reform effort, the lack of knowledge of the basic precepts of the program did not bode well for implementation or success.

In other cases, the principal did not or could not take on the leadership of the program or bring the school to a consistent and effective implementation of the school reform. Rather, he or she permitted the staff to move the program away from its original goals and purpose, in effect derailing a movement toward full and effective implementation of the program as designed by its developers.

Related to this was a shuffling of administrators that saw new principals and superintendents coming and going without appropriate and necessary training in the tenets of the reform efforts being implemented in their schools. As a result, untrained administrators often permitted programs to drift. Two of the five CES sites replaced both the principal and the superintendent within a three-year period. These changes created uncertainty and wariness toward the reform efforts among faculty.

Commitment issues–

Some sites had difficulty gaining and/or sustaining commitment among teachers. Some teachers saw proposed innovations as fads that had little effect on real teaching. Others were either threatened by the changes demanded when implementing the reform or felt overwhelmed by the number and complexity of changes being asked of them.

For example, during the second year of the study, one Paideia site's program was disrupted substantially by the arrival of a new superintendent and the addition of 11 new curriculum elements to the program. Two of the fourth-grade teachers, who were the focus of the study that year, were new to the program and not yet well-trained. By spring, four of the five fourth-grade teachers had applied for transfers to other schools for the next year. With so many new curricular changes happening simultaneously, these teachers, most of whom were inexperienced, felt overwhelmed with the job of teaching at a Paideia school.

Commitment from teachers was particularly difficult to gain in schools where they were asked to "sign on" individually–each teacher saw this as a free choice rather than as a schoolwide focus for reform and improvement. The power of a program was diluted if it was dependent on individual responses rather than a concerted effort.

In other cases, there were no observed concrete indicators of teacher commitment to a school reform. Stated commitments by teachers were not supported by observed instructional behaviors. For example, at one site, a fifth-grade teacher who had received ample training in the interactive teaching strategies stressed by this program's developer and who claimed to support the tenets of the program used approximately two-thirds of a day's instructional time simply providing the children with dittoed worksheets and videotaped programs.

Public, parent, and student perceptions–

The perceptions of members of the school community created problems for some of the reform efforts. As described at the beginning of this paper, Cardinal Elementary, a school already fighting financial and service support problems, lost a number of influential parents to a magnet school because of the magnet's perceived value. Likewise, Pineybark, Mrs. Autry's school, lost many of its top-achieving students to magnet schools for academically gifted students. These students' standardized test scores would have enhanced Pineybark's image among the public, who could have provided additional support for a more successful program.

Students' perceptions were also a threat in one school that had implemented the Computer Curriculum Corporation's program. It appeared that students were losing interest in repetitious computer-based activities. The staff was concerned that this innovation would soon run its course because of dwindling student interest.

Without positive perceptions on the part of parents and students, the battle to gain the cooperation and support of the general public is often lost. With it goes funding, technical assistance, and approval of the staff.

Staffing issues–

Issues related to staffing were a concern for a number of the schools, and often were a complex part of the problems faced by the schools involved in this study. There were many different aspects of staffing that influenced the stability of reform efforts, particularly when they were being implemented in schools with predominantly at-risk children.

Figure 1.– Destabilizing Issues in School Reform Efforts, as Identified by Special Strategies Staff and Field Researchers

Issue	No. of Sites w/Problem (out of 25)	Examples of Issue
Finances	8	a. Federally funded programs disappear when funding dries up. b. Coordinators, floating substitutes, or teachers are dropped from program because of lack of funds. c. Superintendent chooses to use limited funds for his own special-interest program rather than one currently in place.
Leadership	6	a. Superintendent is fired because he exposed poor management and lack of funds. b. Principal does not understand or value the program. c. Teachers and principal do not agree on principles of the program.
Commitment	8	a. Teachers are allowed to implement the program on an individual basis. b. Negative interactions between advocates and critics of the program. c. Program costs teachers' jobs.
Public/Parent/ Student Perceptions	3	a. Parents and/or students have limited knowledge about the program. b. Schools are seen as dangerous or unable to assist students.
Staffing	5	a. Teacher recruitment is difficult for some sites. b. Teachers do not have the skills needed for the program.

Figure 1.– Destabilizing Issues in School Reform Efforts, as Identified by Special Strategies Staff and Field Researchers *(continued)*

Issue	No. of Sites w/Problem (out of 25)	Examples of Issue
Curriculum	6	a. The program does not meet the needs of students at the site. b. School and state goals for students differ significantly. c. Numerous programs with incongruent foci are implemented in the same school.
Political Issues	3	Administrators alter or delete programs for political rather than curricular reasons.
Racial Conflicts	3	a. Divisiveness exists among staff along racial lines. b. Teachers of one race do not believe teachers of another race can work with a particular group of children. c. Principals are charged with overt and covert racism.
Facilities	2	Facilities are insufficient or altered so as to render them useless for the strategy.
Management/ Communication/ Scheduling	3	a. Problems of management of students. b. Communication among staff is dysfunctional. c. Problems with scheduling of students plague the site.

For some schools, the problem was one of recruitment and/or retention of teachers. One school that had a poor reputation and was located far away from a large population base found it difficult to retain teachers and create a stable and knowledgeable staff.

Other schools that undertook complex reforms such as Coalition of Essential Schools or Paideia, where teachers must assume new instructional roles, found that teachers did not possess the teaching skills called for in the programs. For example, in both CES and Paideia, the teacher assumes the role of academic coach and discussion facilitator and the student assumes the role of worker. This kind of teaching requires teachers to quickly assess a student's response or practice of a skill and to respond immediately with corrective feedback or a continued line of questioning based on student response. This stretches some teachers beyond their own teaching repertoire. While it may be possible to train these teachers to perform in this type of educational environment, it requires an enormous amount of staff development. It is also possible that the many demands placed on teachers to perform either a coaching or a discussion facilitator role are beyond the capacity and/or personal comfort zone of many in the current teaching force.

At one Success for All site, an entirely different staff problem emerged. The teachers gave up homogeneous grouping for reading, one of SFA's critical elements. In this case, the intent of the program was altered for the comfort of the teachers. The tutor-teachers who always dealt with the slower students were tired and felt mutinous about the grouping, although teachers of the high-ability groups enjoyed their students and saw no need to change. The school finally gave in and changed the grouping to ensure peace and harmony with tutor-teachers. In this case, the purpose of school's action was not to provide the appropriate Success for All instruction to children, but to provide agreeable working conditions for the staff.

Curricular issues–

Another group of potentially destabilizing factors revolved around the curriculum. For example, the Coalition of Essential Schools calls for an integrated liberal arts curriculum based on "essential" questions and critical thinking. This approach was clearly at odds with the curriculum that already existed in most of the CES schools studied, which called for disparate courses based on developing discrete skills and content or vocational training. Yet, schools often continued both types of courses without regard to this conflict and its impact on students. At one CES site, for example, students were taught to obey authority in ROTC and to challenge authority in English class on the same day.

Some CES schools were given special dispensation from adhering to state-mandated curricula and assessment programs during the initial implementation phases of the

reform. Without this dispensation, the program would have been difficult to implement. Left unresolved in this accommodation for the reform, however, was the long-term decision related to accountability for students' performance on state or national testing.

At another site, the implementation of Computer Curriculum Corporation's program ultimately brought with it the concern of district and school staff that the program only partially met the needs of their students. They felt that the program did a good job of reinforcing skills taught in the classroom and of introducing students to computers. However, they felt that the program lacked the capacity to teach students the higher-order thinking skills that were also part of the school's goals.

Political issues–

Political issues presented schools with external problems that were not linked directly to the school or to the reform effort. While no site was involved in controversy over the choice of a particular reform effort itself, superintendents were fired or principals removed to meet the political issues that stretched beyond the school. The superintendent of Mrs. Weaver's school district, described in the beginning narrative of this paper, was ultimately fired because he tried to overcome the dire financial results of what appeared to be deeply entrenched racism. In other instances, schools with no political power base within the community fought continual "ghost wars" such as those fought by Mrs. Autry and her principal.

Political issues were at least partly responsible for the fact that Pineybark was not named as one of the new magnet schools in its district when a new superintendent implemented a broad magnet program as an alternative to court-ordered busing for desegregation. This appeared to be true because the student population at the school was lower middle class with a ratio of 60 percent white to 40 percent African-American; thus, court-ordered desegregation mandates had already been met. Also, there were no wealthy parents to insist that their children's school be funded at the same level as magnets in the district.

Racial issues–

Racial issues reduced the communication and responsiveness among members of a number of school staffs, limiting their ability to continue reform efforts underway at their schools. Reform programs were resisted on racial grounds alone. For example, developers of one strategy were charged by some members of a school's faculty with being white, ivory-tower professors who knew nothing of teaching inner-city, African-American children. The program was not institutionalized in this school.

At some sites, divisiveness among staff along racial lines inhibited the community building cited by Rossi and Stringfield (1996) as a necessary condition for successful school reform, particularly in schools with predominantly at-risk children. Another problem related to racial issues was the question of whether teachers whose races were different from those of the school's children could effectively work with those children. One site located on an Indian reservation found non-Native American teachers at a distinct disadvantage because they did not understand the children's native culture, nor could they learn about it because of the secrecy of the tribe about its culture.

In other cases, leaders presided over divided schools. Some of these divisions came from the history of desegregation and the effects of its legal remedies on the schools. These included funds used for compensatory education and staffing patterns that reflected the racial membership of the community. The effectiveness of these principals and superintendents to bring about institutionalization of reforms was impaired, and their tenure was often stormy.

Facilities issues–

Inadequate facilities inhibited several sites from fully implementing their reform programs. These sites were forced to reduce available space, so that teachers and students had to work in rooms where other activities were simultaneously occurring. The most dramatic example was the uprooting of an entire high school's students, teachers, administrators, and Coalition of Essential Schools reform from their building while asbestos removal took place. The school shared another school's facilities during the work. For nearly a semester, this loss of coherent space disrupted various teacher teams assigned to cohorts of students, the advisory aspect of the Coalition of Essential Schools program, and the personalization that is a basic principle of the program.

Management/communication/scheduling issues–

This category included a myriad of problems. Communication between "pull-out" and regular teachers and continuous scheduling problems defeated some of the purposes of three reform efforts by reducing the number of interactions teachers could have with one another. In one high school, problems with scheduling reduced enrollment in the Coalition of Essential Schools program. Lack of communication about the CES program in the school even led students who had requested to be in the CES program to believe that they *were* in it, even though they were not. This was not discovered until field research teams for this study conducted follow-up observations of students being tracked over a three-year period in which they were to have been enrolled in the program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper identifies and describes ten specific threats to the full implementation and institutionalization of school reform programs. Each of these factors can destabilize the efforts of local educators to continue programs that they have initiated, fostered, and enhanced.

Sometimes, these factors are present as "ghosts"–intangible threats that by their very mention alter the direction of the energies of the staff. The effects of these ghosts can be subtle, yet pervasive. This was the case in Mrs. Autry's school, where the lack of central administration support and the perennial uncertainty about the program gradually sapped the energy and enthusiasm of the faculty, even though funding continued. Other threats to programs are very real, as with the actual loss of funding faced by Mrs. Weaver's school. These threats more clearly result in the loss of essential personnel and resources that deeply affect the academic success of the students within the school.

At nearly every site, the instability of funding was a constant concern. This often enticed schools to seek external funding and to implement programs that were inappropriate for their students and teachers. Sometimes funds were cut because of perceived or real failure of the reform to deliver on the prescribed goals; more often, however, the reduction came from fiscal difficulties of the schools or government and was unrelated to the performance of the reform efforts. When reduction in funding was threatened or enacted, the staff at these schools had limited success in fighting the disruptive effects without external assistance from either administrators, parents, or other advocates.

With the possible exception of funding cuts, no one threat or impediment described in this paper caused the complete failure of a program. Some sites with serious problems were able to find ways to overcome their problems. These sites had the critical support necessary from administration and a positive perception from the public. It should also be noted that even when a site was not successful in overcoming a problem, it rarely terminated the reform program itself if the funds remained to continue it. What occurred instead was a gradual loss of quality and focus that reduced the influence and effectiveness of the reform effort over time until it seemed to disappear from the school's landscape except in retention of the program's name.

If funding continued but several of the threats described were present, two types of weakened reform efforts appeared to continue: programs that required significant financial investment, and programs that included heavy staff development with few

other extra costs. An example of the former was Computer Curriculum Corporation's program. At sites where this program was implemented, computer costs and contract costs prohibited the termination of the program regardless of whether or not the instruction appeared to be helping students to learn. As an example of a program with a heavy staff development component, teachers with Coalition of Essential Schools training continued the instruction associated with the program in individual classrooms, even after schoolwide support waned. However, in such cases the reform effort had little impact as a coherent program. Rather, this type of implementation existed more as the personal statement of an individual or group of individuals.

We conclude, then, that while many teachers and administrators work very hard to implement educational programs to enhance their at-risk students' opportunities to learn, there are potentially overwhelming debilitating forces that can either lessen the effectiveness of school reform efforts or completely destroy them. It is critical that schools take these factors into consideration as they choose programs and develop the context in which they implement them.

Based on the findings from the Special Strategies studies, we recommend that school leaders who are undertaking school reforms consider and address each of the areas identified by this research as a potential stumbling block on the road to successful implementation:

- **Finance**–Design programs that can be sustained on local funds. Long-term success depends on adequate, stable, and committed financial support. While seed money may be important to the development of programs, the stability of a program depends on the financial commitment to the program.
- **Leadership**–Strengthen leadership at all levels. Superintendents, principals, and teachers lend informed committed leadership to different elements of the program. Without informed and committed leadership, the implementation is limited or doomed to failure.
- **Commitment**–Gain public commitment for the program from administrators and teachers. The faculty must be assured that school reforms do not threaten their jobs. Rather, reforms provide an opportunity for enhanced professionalism.
- **Public/parent/student perceptions**–Inform students, parents, and the community about why program changes are critical to school improvements.
- **Staffing**–Ensure the highest quality of teachers needed for the implementation of the reform. Employ or train faculty for specific elements of the reform. As-

sume high levels of turnover and the need to create necessary professional development for new teachers.

- **Curriculum**–Select programs that meet the needs of students and are congruent with the goals of the school, the district, and the state.
- **Political issues**–Gain commitment from administrators and others responsible prior to the introduction of the program. Retain the commitment by keeping the administration well informed of the success and limitations of the program.
- **Racial issues**–Address issues related to race, ethnicity, or political points of view early in the development or introduction of the program.
- **Facilities**–Assess the facilities for adequacy, attractiveness, and comfort for students, teachers, parents, and community.
- **Management/communications/scheduling**–Assess the overall performance and stability of the school before and during the implementation of the program.

In summary, we advise both policy makers and practitioners that these threats are widespread, and failure to address any one of them can make any program ineffective. Being prepared to address these threats and impediments within the local context becomes key to delivering on the promises of any school reform effort.

References

Herman, R. and S. Stringfield. (1997). *Ten Promising Programs for Educating* All *Children: Evidence of Impact*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Louis, K.S. and M.B. Miles. (1990). *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Rossi, R.J. and S.C. Stringfield, with M.S. Daugherty, K.A. Goya, R. Herman, A.F. Montgomery, P.S. Nesselrodt, M.A. Royal, P.B. Vergun, and E.M. Young. (1996). *Education Reform and Students at Risk: Findings and Recommendations, Volume I*. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research.

Stringfield, S.C., M.A. Millsap, N. Yoder, N. Brigham, P. Nesselrodt, E. Schaffer, N. Karweit, L. Dolan, M. Levin, and L. Smith, editors. (In press). *Urban and Suburban/Rural Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children–Third Year Report*. (Contract Nos. LC90010001 and LC90010002). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Stringfield, S.C., L. Winfield, M.A. Millsap, M.J. Puma, B. Gamse, and B. Randall, editors. (1994). *Urban and Suburban/Rural Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children–First Year Report*. (Contract Nos. LC90010001 and LC90010002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Appendix A
Special Strategies Studies: Descriptions of Ten Promising Programs

Externally Developed Whole-School Programs

1. Comer Model (School Development Program)–
Developed by James Comer and the Yale Child Study Center (1988). The program is designed to create a cadre of significant adults in students' lives–at home, in school, and in the community–who work together to support and nurture each child's total development. Nine components are considered essential: 1) "no-fault" decision making, 2) consensus decision making, 3) collaboration, 4) parent involvement program, 5) school planning management team, 6) mental health team, 7) comprehensive school plan, 8) staff development, and 9) assessment and modification. Central to the program is the school management and governance team composed of the principal, teachers, parents, a mental health specialist, and support staff. The program focus is on the physical, moral, social, psychological, speech, language, cognitive, and intellectual growth of all students. Instruction includes a Focus Program, a small-group pull-out tutorial provided three or more times per week to students who are a year behind grade level, and a Discovery Room to entice and draw out troubled learners. The SDP is adaptable to diverse local curricula.

2. Success for All–
Developed by Robert Slavin and associates at The Johns Hopkins University (1992). A total elementary schoolwide approach using prevention and intensive early intervention to ensure that all students succeed from the beginning and maintain that success throughout the elementary grades. Both curriculum and instruction are research-based. Students are grouped heterogeneously in classes of 25 by age most of the day. They are regrouped across the first three grades by reading-performance levels during a 90-minute daily reading period into classes of 15-20 students and, very importantly, assessed and regrouped every eight weeks. Students having difficulty learning to read are provided one-to-one tutoring by certificated teachers. Strong emphasis is placed on effective family support of students, with a Family Support Team at each school for this purpose.

3. Paideia Program–
Developed by Mortimer Adler of the Institute for Philosophical Research, Chicago, and a group of distinguished citizens (1982). The name is from the Greek word Paideia (PIE-day-uh) meaning the general, humanistic learning that should be the common possession of all human beings. The focus is on high academic achievement for all students, regardless of background. Students are not sorted by ability but learn in heterogeneous classes using original sources such as great books. The goals include

acquisition of basic knowledge, development of basic intellectual skills, and enlarged understanding of ideas and values needed by everyone. Goals are addressed through three instructional "columns": 1) didactic instruction (teacher lectures provide for acquisition of knowledge), 2) coaching (elements include students working on projects at their own pace individually with teachers, peer tutoring, and computer assisted instruction), and 3) small-group seminars (the teacher functions as facilitator using the Socratic method of questioning to explore issues). Schoolwide restructuring K-12 is considered necessary for full implementation of the program.

4. Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer)–
Developed by Theodore Sizer of Brown University (1984). CES is a high school restructuring approach that outlines broad directions and leaves the construction of specific curricula and instructional methods in the hands of local educators. Sizer once worked with Mortimer Adler; the influence is reflected in the CES principles. The "Nine Common Principles" of CES are stated in general terms, since it is assumed that there is no concrete prescription for a good school that can be applied to bring success to any other school. Good schools, however, are expected to share powerful guiding ideas as they strive to improve. The goal of CES is to get students to use their minds well, which is considered a first step in rethinking the entire educational system. CES schools work to simplify their curriculum so that every student will master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. Teachers involve students in active and collaborative work that has evident value and clear goals and that generates many more ideas and challenges as the activity is pursued. Re: Learning is a support and dissemination mechanism for CES that has been established by the Education Commission of the States.

Locally Developed Whole-School Programs

5. Schoolwide Projects–
The "Schoolwide Projects" in the Special Strategies studies represent a funding and organizational option, not a specific content program. Since 1988, schools with 75 percent of their students from poverty homes have been permitted to use Chapter I/Title I funds to serve all students in the school, rather than only specific students as before. In 1994, Congressional action lowered the poverty ratio to 50 percent and moved toward accountability measures focused on the whole school. As a result, it became possible to implement any instructional program to apply to all students schoolwide, rather than only to specific students. Many school districts have moved toward schoolwide projects. To date, these projects have typically reduced class size, eliminated pull-out instruction, increased staff development, and made materials available to all students. The Special Strategies study examined four sites that used schoolwide projects. Two were in an urban district that use schoolwide programs across the district and two were in rural districts that chose schoolwide strategies at the school level but not the district level. The schoolwide projects were all built on local ideas for school improvement that typically included the use of principles from the "school effectiveness research" and other fields, but the core designs were locally developed. The impetus to adopt a schoolwide project

generally came from the building principal or district Chapter I/Title I coordinator with the goal of raising achievement of low achievers, increasing parent involvement, and creating high academic expectations. Individualizing instruction was a common theme with smaller classes and several curricular and instructional approaches emphasized at the various sites, including: stress on whole language in combination with phonics, integrated reading-writing-arts, and interdisplinary thematic lessons. Computer assisted instruction occurred frequently and for a broad range of students. Staff development and training was a part of all programs. Most schoolwide projects had a schoolwide coordinator, although responsibilities varied. Schoolwide programs involved parents in a variety of activities including: monthly parent meetings, training programs, volunteer assistance, school governance groups, and fund-raising activities. Some schools also used home visits, conducted by either the teacher or other parents.

6. Extended Year Schoolwide Projects–
One strategy to help students learn more and better is to provide them with more class time. Some schools have lengthened the school year, using either summer sessions or special programs during winter vacation. Summer sessions are by far the more common. These sessions can operate on two levels: 1) remedial instruction for students at risk of failing, and 2) extension and enrichment of regular-school-year instruction. Two schoolwide extended year programs were the focus of the Special Strategies investigation and were part of a districtwide major city program. Both school sites offered a 19-day extension of the regular school year. All teachers participated, and although the program was voluntary, all students were encouraged to take part. The extended sessions focused on enrichment rather than remedial instruction with classes exploring topics covered during the regular school year in greater depth, with new material introduced. Although classroom-focused instruction was the norm at both sites, the flexible nature of the extended sessions permitted smaller classes, classroom work revolving around application, more team teaching, more field trips, and a greater interdisciplinary focus than during the regular school year The program encouraged site-based decision making and teacher participation in shaping the extended program. Principals and teachers were required to pass a special hiring process and to make a five-year commitment.

Externally Developed Targeted Programs

7. Reading Recovery–
Developed by Marie Clay of Auckland University, New Zealand (1970s). Reading Recovery is a preventive one-to-one tutoring program designed to help first-grade children having reading difficulties develop the kinds of strategies used by good readers. Students having the most difficulty learning to read spend a half hour per day being tutored by a certificated, specially trained Reading Recovery teacher. Throughout the individualized program, reading and writing are used flexibly to help children develop effective reading strategies and skills. Instruction continues until the individual child has reached the text reading level of his or her class, has developed effective reading strate-

gies, and should be able to continue learning without extra help. A child's program typically lasts from 12 to 16 weeks.

8. Computer Assisted Instruction–
Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) has generally been an individualized drill-and-practice routine in which the computer software monitors students' progress and provides additional practice in their weakest areas. Students may progress to more advanced skills when they show that they have mastered basic skills. In addition to drilling students on skills, computer applications may include word processing to facilitate the revision process in student writing. Some CAI software includes problem solving intended to challenge students to use higher-order thinking skills. Sometimes the software produces reports, or sends messages to the computer assistant, to help keep the teacher aware of students' progress and need for additional instruction. In the Special Strategies studies of CAI programs, the two longitudinal school sites used Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) software. Of the four CAI replication sites, one school used Jostens Learning Corporation (JLC) software, two schools used Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) software, and one school used Writers at Work (WAW) software.

Locally Developed Targeted Programs

9. Extended Time Projects–
The Special Strategies researchers examined two very different extended time programs. One site was a summer migrant program enrolling approximately 300 migrant students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The students received instruction, meals, and health services from mid-June to mid-August. The program was geared towards increasing basic skills, especially English, and making school an enjoyable experience. The other extended time program was an extended day program serving the school's Chapter I students during the regular year. This after-school "Chapter I Club" served approximately 40 first-grade to third-grade students. Both extended time programs focused on reading, writing, and personal development.

10. Tutoring Programs ***(Locally Adapted)–***
One-to-one tutoring is the most frequently proven effective supplementary teaching model. Preventive tutoring models tend to use certified teachers or paraprofessionals. Remedial tutoring programs often rely on older students and/or volunteers, although paraprofessionals may be used. Both sites included in this study used a commercial program (METRA) as part, but not all, of their tutoring programs. METRA was a highly structured tutoring program widely used at the time of the study. One site switched to predominately small-group work using computer assisted instruction but continued METRA tutoring for a few students needing individual assistance. The second longitudinal site provided a wide array of tutoring options that shifted over time: peer tutoring to all students in first grade and on a pull-out basis for second through fourth grades; cross-age tutoring in which fifth-grade students assisted second-grade students; METRA; and small-group (three to four students) tutorials conducted by paraprofessionals.

NOTE: For more detailed information about these ten programs and their effects, see the 1997 Educational Research Service monograph *Ten Promising Programs for Educating ALL Children: Evidence of Impact*, by Rebecca Herman and Sam Stringfield.

Educational Research Service

2000 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22201
Phone: (703) 243-2100 • Fax: (703) 243-5971